

## Case Study A2: Teaching & Supporting Learning

When interacting with the students in the workshop I include icebreakers within an induction format to help participants feel comfortable in the workshop. Cornell University (2023) describes ice breakers as 'fun activities to help people get to know one another... can use them to help acquaint students with course content and expectations.' This approach to the beginning of an induction helps to create a more informal setting where students can relax and learn. In ice breaker segments I frequently include: staff introductions, student introductions, asking about previous experience, structure of the session, simple learning outcomes of the session, examples of artwork they might make and small tours around the room they are going to be in. This positive opening can harbour a dynamic and exciting learning experience for the student.

The aim of including this information is to encourage students to feel that they have ownership over their learning and also the space they are in. Being able to feel in control of your own learning allows students to use the session in a way that will benefit them most. This in turn can make the experience more enriching and enable a deeper connection to what they are learning. Within the workshops this helps for when students are returning and are wanting to work on their own, by giving them more of a connection to the space and what they learnt.

It is also a key way of starting to build community within the classroom, by building rapport with students and encouraging a dynamic learning environment. Phelan (1991) talks about the community within classrooms and how vital they are in the development of a students experience. Her article talks about how 'learning is a process of making connections... seeing the interconnectedness of different subjects and experiences, of learning to think.' Not only can a community within a classroom/workshop make students feel comfortable and confident around the equipment and processes, but will also enable deeper learning and understanding through positive experiences and the community of the area. Within the workshops we have had students talk to us about how they came to the workshops not really knowing what they wanted to do or feeling shy and are graduating with confidence, knowledge and friends they have made from the community in the workshop.

This approach can be difficult for some students as confidence isn't always what comes naturally to each individual. Therefore, it can be difficult to engage with the whole group in the icebreaker segments. In a cross programme event lecture about compassionate assessment (Currant, 2023) there was discussion on the differences within students in cohorts and how they shouldn't always be treated in the same way and how flexibility towards each individual is very important. I think this transfers to more areas than just assessment. In teaching environments I think this is also very important to respect the differences of individuals and allow them to enjoy the same learning experience. This can then lead to students feeling more understood and having control over their learning.

Cornell University (2023) *Ice Breakers*. Available at: [https://teaching.cornell.edu/teaching-resources/building-inclusive-classrooms/icebreakers#:~:text=Icebreakers%20are%20fun%20activities%20to,students%20to%20the%20online%20environment.\(Accessed:18/03/23\).](https://teaching.cornell.edu/teaching-resources/building-inclusive-classrooms/icebreakers#:~:text=Icebreakers%20are%20fun%20activities%20to,students%20to%20the%20online%20environment.(Accessed:18/03/23).)

Phelan, P. (1991) 'Issues in English: A Classroom Community', *The English Journal*, Vol. 80, No.7, pp. 19-20. Available at: <https://doi-org.arts.idm.oclc.org/10.2307/819263>

Dr Neil Currant (2023) 'Compassionate Assessment' [Lecture]. *Theories, Policies and Practices*. University of the Arts London. 15 February.